

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 17, 2024

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Christopher Wray
Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation

Dear Director Wray:

I write to you requesting information regarding what steps the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) took to investigate the “several anonymous tips” it received concerning online threats made by Colt Gray, the reported gunman in the September 4, 2024, shooting at Apalachee High School in Barrow County, Georgia.¹ According to reports, Colt Gray shot and killed four people, including two students and two teachers. At least nine others were injured when the gunman opened fire inside the school.² It’s reported that as early as May 2023, the FBI’s National Threat Operations Center (NTOC) received “several anonymous tips” stating that Gray made online posts with guns threatening to commit a school shooting.³ According to a Justice Department report on the FBI’s NTOC Threat Intake Processing System, NTOC threat intake examiners process tips, develop reports on the tips, make a determination about the threat level of the tip and whether immediate action is needed, and disseminate information to the appropriate FBI or other federal, state, and/or local entity for further investigation.⁴

Additional news reports show that the anonymous tips warned that a user who went by the name “Lanza,” that was written in Russian, posted messages to Discord threatening to shoot up a middle school.⁵ Reports say that “[i]nvestigators determined that the email address associated with the Discord account belonged to the younger Mr. Gray, who was 13 at the time.”⁶ According to the FBI press statement and other reports, within 24 hours investigators determined the posts originated in Georgia, and the FBI Atlanta Field Office referred the matter to local law enforcement for action.⁷ It’s reported

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigations, *FBI Atlanta Statement on Incident at Apalachee High School*, Press Release (Sep. 4, 2024) <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/atlanta/news/fbi-atlanta-statement-on-incident-at-apalachee-high-school>.

² Gabriele Regalbuto, *Who is the alleged Georgia school shooter? What we know*, Fox News (Sep. 4, 2024) <https://www.foxnews.com/us/who-georgia-school-shooter-what-we-know>.

³ Tara Suter, *Suspect interviewed about threats before Georgia high school shooting: FBI*, The Hill (Sep. 5, 2024) <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/4863140-georgia-high-school-shooting-suspect-previously-interviewed-fbi/>; Federal Bureau of Investigations, *FBI Atlanta Statement on Incident at Apalachee High School*, Press Release (Sep. 4, 2024) <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/atlanta/news/fbi-atlanta-statement-on-incident-at-apalachee-high-school>.

⁴ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *Privacy Impact Statement for the Threat Intake Processing System (TIPS)*, Report at 2 (Dec. 2, 2020) <https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/pia-tips.pdf/view>.

⁵ Sean Keenan, Rick Rojas, Glenn Thrush, and Michael Levenson, *Tip on School Shooting Threat Last Year Led to Suspect’s Door*, New York Times (Sep. 5, 2024) <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/09/05/us/georgia-shooting-colt-gray-threat.html>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ Tara Suter, *Suspect interviewed about threats before Georgia high school shooting: FBI*, The Hill (Sep. 5, 2024) <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/4863140-georgia-high-school-shooting-suspect-previously-interviewed-fbi/>;

that local law enforcement interviewed Gray and his father about the threatening posts, but Gray denied making them.⁸ Reports say that Gray admitted he had a discord account, but deleted it.⁹ It's further been reported that at the time, there was no probable cause for arrest or for action by federal or state law enforcement.¹⁰ Reportedly an investigator wrote in their report about the interview that "[d]ue to the inconsistent nature of the information received by the FBI" the allegations that Gray or his father were "the user behind the Discord account that made the threat cannot be substantiated."¹¹

The FBI reviewed, processed, and disseminated the tips about Gray within 24 hours, indicating the online threats to commit a school shooting required the immediate attention of law enforcement. Yet, media reports and the FBI's September 4 press statement don't fully explain whether the FBI investigated or assisted local law enforcement in the investigation of the threatening Discord posts or exactly what investigative information the FBI shared with local law enforcement about the online threats.¹² As I've stressed to the FBI in the past, it's critically important for the public and Congress to fully understand what the FBI does or does not do to follow up on the tips it receives about potential dangerous threats to public safety.¹³

Accordingly, to better understand the FBI's handling of this matter, please provide answers to the following no later than October 1, 2024.

1. What threat level assessment did the FBI assign to the several anonymous tips it received about Gray threatening to commit a school shooting? Was this threat level assessment provided to local law enforcement? If not, why not?
2. How were the several anonymous tips transmitted to the FBI? Please describe in detail.

Federal Bureau of Investigations, *FBI Atlanta Statement on Incident at Apalachee High School*, Press Release (Sep. 4, 2024) <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/atlanta/news/fbi-atlanta-statement-on-incident-at-apalachee-high-school>.

⁸ Stepheny Price, *Georgia school shooting suspect on FBI radar since 2023 as possible threat after online remarks*, Fox News (Sep. 4, 2024) <https://www.foxnews.com/us/georgia-school-shooter-fbi-radar-2023-possible-threat-online-remarks>.

⁹ NY Times *supra* note 5.

¹⁰ Price *supra* note 8.

¹¹ NY Times *supra* note 5.

¹² See Federal Bureau of Investigations, *FBI Atlanta Statement on Incident at Apalachee High School*, Press Release (Sep. 4, 2024) <https://www.fbi.gov/contact-us/field-offices/atlanta/news/fbi-atlanta-statement-on-incident-at-apalachee-high-school>; Stepheny Price, *Georgia school shooting suspect on FBI radar since 2023 as possible threat after online remarks*, Fox News (Sep. 4, 2024) <https://www.foxnews.com/us/georgia-school-shooter-fbi-radar-2023-possible-threat-online-remarks>.

¹³ See Grassley: *Government Must Do Better to Follow Processes to Prevent Gun Violence*, (Feb. 16, 2018) <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-government-must-do-better-follow-processes-prevent-gun-violence>; *Committee Learns of Multiple Law Enforcement Lapses Prior to Parkland*, (Feb. 23, 2018) <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/committee-learns-multiple-law-enforcement-lapses-prior-parkland>; *Grassley Officially Schedules Hearing on Parkland Shooting; Adds to Growing List of Work on School Safety and Guns*, (Mar. 8, 2018) <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-officially-schedules-hearing-parkland-shooting-adds-growing-list-work>; *Grassley: We Must Hold Government Accountable for Failures Before Parkland Tragedy*, (Mar. 14, 2018) <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-we-must-hold-government-accountable-failures-parkland-tragedy>; *Grassley Opening Remarks at the Senate Judiciary Committee on the Highland Park Shooting*, (Jul. 20, 2022) <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/video/watch/grassley-opening-remarks-at-the-senate-judiciary-committee-on-the-highland-park-shooting>; *Grassley Presses FBI on Parkland Shooting After Months without Completion of Planned Report*, (Aug. 27, 2018) <https://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-presses-fbi-parkland-shooting-after-months-without-completion-planned>.

3. What information did the FBI NTOC provide to the FBI Atlanta Field Office about the several anonymous tips about Gray? Did the FBI Atlanta Field Office provide this information to local law enforcement? If not, why not?
4. Did local law enforcement request additional information, investigative assistance, or resources from the FBI concerning Gray? If yes, were these requests granted? If not granted, why not?
5. Did the FBI Atlanta Field Office provide investigative support to local law enforcement to assist in the investigation of Gray? If not, why not? If yes, describe, in detail, the investigative assistance provided.
6. Did the FBI open its own assessment, preliminary inquiry, or full investigation based on the several anonymous tips it received about Gray? If not, why not? If yes, please describe, in detail.
7. What actions did the FBI take to confirm whether Gray was associated with the Discord posts? Did the FBI contact Discord to confirm whether Gray made the threatening online posts about committing a school shooting? If not, why not? If yes, did the FBI provide this information to local law enforcement?
8. Did the FBI receive additional tips about Gray after receiving the several anonymous tips in May 2023? If yes:
 - a. Describe, in the detail, the tips received and how they were communicated to the FBI.
 - b. Did the FBI investigate these tips?
 - c. Were these tips provided to local law enforcement?
9. Has local law enforcement requested resources from the FBI to assist the victims and survivors of the Apalachee High School community? If yes, were these resources granted? If not, why not?

Thank you for your prompt review and response. If you have any questions, please contact Brian Randolph on my Committee staff at (202) 224-0642.

Sincerely,



Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Budget